



Activities with young children

Recently there's been high profile news coverage around a care home that invited young children to come and join in life with their older residents. The results were beautiful! If you haven't already seen it then you should definitely watch Channel Four's 'Old People's Home for 4 Year Olds'!

Now that the conversation is open and the idea is fresh in people's minds, it's the perfect opportunity to invite younger children to join in with some of your activities! In 2015 Bright Shadow ran an evaluated project with nursery children and people with dementia in London. You can read our report here: <http://brightshadow.org.uk/category/reports/> but we also wanted to share some ideas and tips for people who want to start doing this themselves.

This is a slightly different Bright Ideas sheet to normal because as well as the activity ideas we've also included some practical suggestions to get you going. You can use this sheet to include grandchildren and family members connected to the older people you work with, or you can use them to arrange for a nursery or primary school to come and engage in a more formal session.

Activity List

1) Some might say we live in a health and safety mad world, but we all know how important safeguarding is! When inviting any children to participate make sure you have the right permissions and safeguarding in place. Here are some things to think about... If you are inviting a nursery or school they will already have procedures so ask them to help. Ask them to use their permissions templates, risk assessment forms, ratio guidelines etc. rather than creating more paperwork. If it's children connected to the setting you work in, just make sure that one of their family members is with them at all times and risk assess well. Don't leave children unattended without a DBS checked member of staff.

2) Stick to an activity structure. Children often have shorter attention spans, so if you have an organised group coming, do multiple activities in one session. Bright Shadow's themed approach works really well to engage younger years. Pick a



theme, do an introduction, a warm up, some singing, a movement activity or story telling and a nice warm down.

3) Introduction questions: Children will often be shy to begin with, so an introduction question is a good idea. Asking 'what is your favourite...' is normally a good starter. It will also help to build connections between children and adults if they both have the same favourite thing, like flower or sport, or thing to eat for pudding.

4) For organised groups, try an exchange that happens before the first session to help children and adults to feel like they are getting to know one another. Maybe organise for the children to create a story from a picture for the adults, and the adults can create a story from the same picture for the children. Then exchange the stories to share with the respective groups.

5) It's a great opportunity for the older adults to help the younger children to do things. Games are brilliant for this. Set up a can toss and partner adults and children to work in pairs to knock down as many cans as possible.

6) Puppets work really well with children and adults. The more adult appropriate the puppet the better, but even hand puppets will help to aid communication. Give the adults the puppets and see if they can use them to communicate with the children and then switch round giving the children a go with the puppets.

7) Add some costume to your theme. Children love to dress up and often adults will join in to "please the children". If you're going to space make some space helmets or alien antennae, if you're going to the beach get sunhats, or for snowy themes wear scarves woolly hats.

8) Tell stories together allowing contributions from both adults and children. Remember to have lots of visual prompts, for instance a teddy bear who is going on an adventure, and then a picture of a landscape that the bear might be going to explore, like the jungle or a city, or under the sea.

9) Sing together. For each theme pick one or two songs that the adults would know and one or two that the children would know. Then the adults and children can help each other learn and/or enjoy the new songs.

10) Snack together. Healthy snacks and drinks are important to children too and sharing a snack together can be a lovely moment.



BRIGHTBOXES
By Bright Shadow

Bright Ideas Activity Sheet

11) Dance together. Children often love to dance. Sit the adults in a circle, pick some music that goes with your theme and ask the children to find an adult partner. Then either holding hands or both holding opposite ends of pieces of material, get them to dance with each other. The children can stand up, spin around twist and jump, whilst the adult sits, dances with their arms and feet directing the child where to go. (The adults can also stand too if they are able!!)

12) Make collages together. Rip up lots of coloured paper and get the children and adults to collaborate in making pictures. Give direction by linking it into the theme, maybe the sea, or a bonfire, or a snowy mountain. This one may get a bit sticky!

Want more?

Looking for resources?

Looking for resources to help you deliver themed, creative group activities? Take a look at our Bright Box activity resource kits. We have a range for people running group activities, as well as for people doing activities in a one to one setting: <http://brightshadow.org.uk/bright-boxes/>

Working in a care setting?

For more ideas and inspiration like this, why not book onto one of our 'Out of the Box' training sessions?

On this one-day course we help you to develop your skills in thinking creatively when it comes to delivering activities and promoting wellbeing. We look at planning creative one-off activities as well as special occasion activity sessions, inspired by themes and events such as The Queens Birthday. For information on how you could take part in this training please visit:

<http://brightshadow.org.uk/training/>

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